Spectrum 2004

Garden

t Experience

RECIPE FOR THE BEST

My Mother's Mind is a B

Her

illogical

anger

What They Wish

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SHIFTING

R. Niven Armentrout

Patterson to Baltimore
Baltimore to Patterson
up and down the Jersey Turnpike
squirming and squabbling
counting license plates and time
five vying for Mother's attention
Mom, singing, smiling, placating
Dad, behind the wheel, stoic.

At the rest stop, years of coveting
that pair of magnetic Scottie dogs
in the vending machine beside
Kleenex, Wrigley's and Tampons
begging please, oh please Mother.
hearing, it's not necessary,
and not understanding the lack
of money, only rejection.

Felt more keenly each year
as the generation gap widened
into a chasm into which we both fell
headlong with me emerging an adult
with an ideology so beyond one kind
and gentle woman the gap remained
bottomless and infinite connected
only by the umbilical cord of love.

Years later, Grandmother's funeral,
first adult trip up the turnpike.
I buy those dogs and now
they sit face to face on my shelf
clinging together, though
with the slightest shift
they fly apart, opposite poles,
much like my mother and I.

Why

Joel Griffith (2003 Graduate)

On an edge of pins and needles
Precipice is giving way.
I fall to oceans down below
Onto rocks that hear me break.
Over stones worn smooth by weather
I wash up a broken man;
Mouth agape and ribs asunder,
Limbs lying where they land.

In my hand a slip of paper
There, perhaps, reveals a plan?
Only "why?" is written thinly,
Obscured by clumps of moistened sand.
Precipice calls down to water,
"What's the state of yonder man?"
"He has landed without cushion,"
Replies water.
Silence now, from sky to sand.

Rachel Lewis

Questions

"Go long, Barry!"

I heard the yell, but it didn't register in my head until the ball was about a foot away from my face. Fireworks exploded behind my eyelids as the ball smashed into my face. Simon had an iron arm, so the ball was traveling at inhuman speed. I'm not sure if I hit the ground or not. Was I unconscious? Was I dead? *No, no. Put that thought out of your mind, Barry. What's it doing in the air like that?*

Confusion and blackness overwhelmed me. I think that's where my story starts, but don't quote me.

***

The light filters into the forest, making me realize I'm not unconscious. My head is fuzzy, and I can't remember how I got into the woods. My hands are wet. Not just wet, but sticky. I look at them. That isn't—why the hell are my hands covered in blood?

My hands go out of focus as I look behind them. Suddenly, I can't breathe. No, I just can't bring myself to take a breath. The pieces fall into place. The blood on my hands and—that—propped up against the tree, bathed in blood. *What have I done? Why can't I remember?*

"I told you not to cross me." Who said that? *Oh no, I think it was me.* Why did I say that? Cross me? What kind of drugs am I on and why can't I remember? Dread wells up inside me. I've killed a man, and there's a horrid possibility I've done it before.

"I'm sorry, sir," the man gurgles, his throat filled with blood. I jump. Or do I? I don't feel my body move. What I do feel is my mouth moving again. I try to clench my mouth shut.

"Are you?" I ask, failing to control my voice. Laughter fills the air around us. A cold, harsh laugh. I feel my body shaking. Does that mean it's me who's laughing?

"You're scared," the man below me says, almost amused. "I can see it in your eyes."

What is this? This guy can see the real me! I attempt to affirm his accusations, but the only thing my body does is kick the man in the head and tell him to shut up. How is he still alive? I can't answer that question, for lights—and pain—explode behind my eyes.

***

I force my eyes open after—well how long was it? It doesn't matter. Focusing on my surroundings, I find I'm in the same forest—bad sign. The one difference I see is that I am no longer staring down at a dying man. I *am* the dying man, looking up at myself.

If I'm dying, where is the pain? I moan and wish I'd never asked my body that. All of it overwhelms me. I still want to know why I'm still alive. It does seem like I have control over my body this time."Kill me," I hear myself say. *Nope, no control.* Why did—whichever body I'm in—make me think I have control, even though I don't?

I hear that laugh again. I feel my eyes rise to see the other me laughing. Do I really laugh like that? It's horrid—and creepy. "Is that what you want?" the man above me asks. Not waiting for my answer, he draws a dagger. "I believe I can fulfill your desire." He raises the knife high.

I can't see what happens as he slams the knife down, for my perspective changes again. *I'm going to be sick,* I think as I find myself running through the forest I'm trapped in. *Where—no wait, who—am I? No time for thought. I'm saving me from—well, me. What the hell was—* SMACK! I come in contact with the man I was first inside as I head butt him.

He—I—grunt beneath me. "How dare you touch him?" I scream. I just assume this time I have no control. I do realize that I have an extreme sense of protection for the dying man.

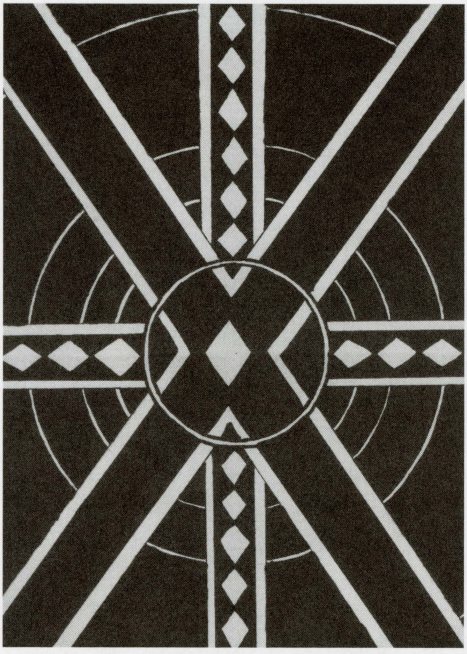
"You'll regret that," he snaps from beneath me. What in all living hell w—my thought is cut off as the dagger slams into my chest. I yell out in pain, but nevertheless wrench the dagger out. I have to save him. The only thought in my head is keeping the other alive. I raise the dagger, and with a strangled cry, I drive it into my attacker's throat. He falls on top of me. I grunt and shove him off. Spots flash before my eyes. *No, no blacking out! I have to... to save him!* The blackness comes over me, despite my protests. *NO! No! no... n... o...*

***

Visions flashed through my head. Blood covered hands—dead man against a tree—man attacking another man—man dying upon another man. All at once, I snapped into consciousness. My head was pounding. Blinking, I rubbed my head and contemplated the dream.

As I did so, the focus came back to my eyes. The room was white. Very white. Almost sterile, it seemed. I was in a hospital. But why? That wasn't important, though. More importantly, the dream—the people, who were they? I thought hard to remember their faces. *Hold on. All three of them, they look almost exactly like—me.*

All of them are dead, and my mind empty. Questions flood into my brain. *Who am I? Where did I come from? What happened? How did I get here? Were those people... me? Is that why I can't remember anything?* I lie back on the bed. "What a horrid dream," I say quietly and drift to sleep, hoping I will dream something better this time.



Maya Robinson-Kellum

anGer

Raises its head.
Careless words bring it, rising from the depths.
Heat rises.
They take turns, like vegetables in a soup pot.
Mad dashes to the surface, then instantly submerged.
Keep looking.
Now farther off.
Where did it go?

Anne Arbaugh

A *Shattered* Glass

Shards of iridescence
Bursting from the center
Slice the silence—
Crystalline daggers form a shower;
A bare foot bleeds a blooming flower.

Justine Trainor

My Mother's Mind is a Bit of Old Lace

R. Niven Armentrout

My mother's mind is a bit of old lace.
Today's news and names slip
Through airy spaces,
Forever lost.

Old memories cling, fragile gossamer.
I gather handfuls, salvaging the past,
Preserving the fabric of family
Before the last thread is broken.

Gardener

Spring arrived without you.
Can summer be possible?

Daffodils bloom,
but no hand tills the garden.

There will be no marigolds
or zinnias this year.

The iris will not be cut back
and the roses will wither.

The spade and the hoe
lie useless, and I sleep
with your gloves.

SAVIOR

Blaine Geter

Our Sanctuary, surrounded by feathers
and floating on metal springs.
The flickering lights come from a box of images
as we are consumed into the darkness.
I lower my gaze because just one look
and you can cause my walls to fall like Jericho.
Our shadows become fictitious because the only thing that matters
is the truth in your eyes.
I became your Mary, and the world sat in amazement as I birthed... our love.
Tears synchronize with my heart and flow rhythmically
as I reminisce about our love.
I don't mean to blaspheme, but those nights were holy and your kisses... sacred.
The water poured down upon us like rain as we stood there,
mesmerized by each other's reciprocity.
The trickles soothed us and right before our eyes two halves became whole.
You baptized me that night.
Every night of my life, if I could, I would rededicate myself to you.
To become born again from a world of loveless sin.

The *Heart* of the *Matter*

If an individual puts great amounts of thought and effort into the creation of something he truly loves, I believe the product is art. The art form is of no importance: painters paint, dancers dance, writers write, and so on. As a writer, I create short stories, essays, and poetry. I am well acquainted with the satisfaction I experience after writing something new. I also know the dejection associated with an instructor's disapproval of my work. I remember having both feelings–one on the heels of the other–as a five-year-old in kindergarten. That moment has caused me to wonder one thing since then: If art is self-expression, should the criticism of that art be considered oppression?

Playtime in the kindergarten classroom held for me an air of possibility. Which station should I choose? Would it be building blocks, finger painting, housekeeping–ah! Housekeeping! What better way to relax than to feed a few babies and scrub a floor or two? It was settled, then. And I'd imagine, during a brief alphabet lesson, my escape to the kid-sized kitchen retreat. Sadly, it hardly ever worked the way I wanted it to. The same group of loudmouths beat me to the housekeeping center nearly every day, and I was forced to find somewhere else to play.

My second choice was the coloring station, where a brand new box of crayons was calling my name. I rolled up my sleeves and reached eagerly for several bright crayons and a clean sheet of paper. Ohhhhh, yes. This was much more fun than pretend cooking! To hell with those housekeeping hoodlums! I continued drawing, and I was increasingly impressed with my artistic abilities as I added some random hearts to the picture. Large hearts, medium hearts, and small hearts decorated the paper, exhibiting my skill in the medium of red crayon. Mrs. LaMotte, the teacher's assistant (about whom the only feature I can recall is the tower of black, almost Marge Simpson-like hair), came by at that point. So thrilled was I with my creation that I called for her to take a look. She stood behind my chair and peered down at my heart collage, exclaiming, "Well, Justine, those aren't hearts at all! The bottoms are flat, not pointed!" She walked off to supervise another play station, but I remained lost in disappointment. What was she saying? Of course they were

hearts! Not only that, but they were good hearts... weren't they? Where there had been confident pride, there was now bewilderment and shame. I had planned to take my artwork home and hang it up, but now I saw it as flawed, incorrect. It wasn't the sort of work that went on the refrigerator, and I couldn't possibly take this mess home. Hearts with no points?! What was I thinking...?

I don't clearly remember what I did next. I vaguely recall going back to fix some of those wrongly drawn hearts, but I can't be sure. I can't even remember whether I threw my work away or put it in my take-home folder. The only certainty is that I became self-conscious that day. Although I'm now sure Mrs. LaMotte meant her comment to be helpful, it changed my thinking permanently. Artwork was no good unless it was perfect; unless it was perfect, it wouldn't be praised. This attitude remains a part of my thinking today, as I put the finishing touches on college writing assignments. I pour my heart into writing the perfect paper, adding to it and making changes for days. Because of its importance to me, I never hand in a written assignment without being completely satisfied with it. Even so, there are occasions when my efforts do not pay off. If I don't receive the highest grade, I wonder what portion of the heart is missing this time.

If an individual puts great amounts of thought and effort into the creation of something he or she truly loves, I believe that the product is art. While I still firmly believe this, I am conflicted. The problem is that on that day in kindergarten, I didn't learn a typical lesson in sharing or patience. I learned it matters what someone else thinks. I will never escape the need for another person's approval when it comes to my work, be it a short story or a collage of hearts.

So what about the heart of the person I am today? Let's just say I draw it with a point.

I will NO Longer

De'Anne Roye

I will no longer be that child,
Who doesn't appreciate
The strength of her upbringing,
Just because it was a bit strict for her liking.

I will no longer be that girl,
Singing sad love songs,
Like they were genetically built into her brain.

I will no longer be that woman,
Who doesn't take responsibility
For her procrastination,
And doesn't apply the lessons of her life.

I will no longer be that person,
Who's stuck in her past,
And cannot see beyond that into my bright future.

But I will be that individual,
Who makes an imprint on my destiny.

O P E N DOORS

I picture all around me
All around me, open doors.
New ideas arise through my mind,
Through my mind they soar.

I sit, I think, I wonder,
Wonder what the world has stored,
Hands from every angle,
From every angle they are poured.

Eyes upon my work,
Works of art are being spread.
Praying hard at night,
Hard at night that they be read.

'Tis not the doors I'm scared of,
That I'm scared of not the doors.
'Tis just that when doors open
It could mean a closed door more.

Risa Galler

The *Princess*

She loves to sing the song that's in her heart,
That sweet melody that floats through the land
Bringing men to their knees, clasping their hands,
Begging her to accept their wretched hearts.

Armed with a sword, dressed in a knight's armor,
She charges among her men on the field;
To her adversaries she will not yield,
She punishes everyone she abhors.

Armed with a rose, dressed in an evening gown,
She entertains men from different lands,
Ambitious suitors who desire her hand,
But none offer more than a jeweled crown.

She is best known as the mistress of fire,
A wild, intense woman who rules her world.
Fiercely fighting foes in this mortal world,
She's the object of every man's desire

Young, fair, bold, gifted and full of substance,
Her lingering presence graces the land.
A masterpiece of nature's skillful hand,
There's no one who equals her brilliance.

shattered illusions

Despair
drips
from
me
splashing at my feet
in the puddle that is
my life.

Oh! to be a child again
jumping in the puddle
shattering it into
a thousand prisms.

R. Niven Armentrout

illogical *Heart*

Following lost minds toward interpretations,
attitudes and theories of existence that
have misguided this empty soul.
Days of a life previously breathed
are unintelligible and I am alone
with this confusion.
Rather I would wish your hand and
your heart to connect me
to existence.

Eric Tbanner

What They *Wish*

How we perceive something may not be how others do...

They stood there, three figures silhouetted by the light and dwarfed by the outlines of the massive trees standing everywhere but directly before them. The path led to the end of their long journey through the Forest, beckoning them to step out into the brilliance of golden sunlight and dazzling color.

The sight was more than Annick and Katarin could take in after growing up in the dark Forest. Behind them, the trees blocked the sun, and their only source of light was a constant cold, green glow emanating from the trees. A world, such as the one they looked upon now, could not be dreamed up, even if one spent a thousand years dreaming. Truly new things are impossible to dream, and this was entirely new for the two girls. Their guide, The Watchman, gave an amused smile. He had seen that sense of wonder over many years on the many people who left the Forest. "There it is: the Sunlit Valley. Every morning the sun rises and travels across the sky. Every evening it reaches the other side and returns the next morning. There it is warmer, the water is fresher and cooler, and the food is more delicious and plentiful. While life is not always easy for those who enter the valley, there is more to live for."

Annick gazed over the valley. Never in her life had she seen anything more beautiful. The light danced over the grasses and sparkled across the streams. Vivid colors she had never seen before bejeweled plants, flowers, stones, and even the roofs of the settlements throughout the land. She caught glimpses of animals and heard birds singing. In the distance, children chased each other in a game of tag as men and women moved from one place to another working at their tasks. Everything was like a dream, and Annick almost felt that, if she moved, she might wake up and be sucked back into the dark depths of the cruel, oppressive Forest. In the Forest glowed a dull light, but most was darkness; everything was cold and damp and silent. One followed the dismal daily cycle of an existence organized by the Elders, who controlled when to eat, when to sleep, when to begin and end work, and when to start the cycle all over again. Focusing on the valley, Annick felt a bursting of hope and excitement; there was true freedom down there.

Katarin did not share her sister's exhilaration over the sight. She saw the sun beat down upon the land, burning everything with its ferocious glare. Tangles of unknown plant life and a dizzying blur of unfamiliar terrain rushed into her vision, causing her to blink hard and turn her head for a moment to relieve the nausea. There were wild animals down there ready to rip her into pieces, and noisy, boisterous people, undoubtedly hostile. The sight was unbearable, and Katarin thought back to the Forest. There everything was safe and secured by the Elders, who knew what was better for all. They were hidden by the quiet dark, away from this scorching golden light and harsh noise. Everyone was kept safe from wild creatures and barbaric people. Life in the Forest was secure. Life in the Forest was comfortable. Life in the Forest was predictable. Life in the Valley was not—Katarin knew that there was no way she could live down there. She could not face the many dangers of being where nobody knew what would happen next. She had to get away, far away. She turned away from the sight and ran.

"Katarin!" Annick shouted, starting to dash after her. "Katarin, where are you going?"

"Let me go!" she shouted, "I need to stop her!"

The Watchman held her back as she strained to rush after Katarin, who was disappearing up the path, deeper into the Forest. "You cannot stop her," He responded. "She does not want to go on. She does not believe in the place where we are going."

"I'll make her go on!" she cried, "I'll make her believe!"

"You cannot force someone to believe anything, Annick. And some only believe what they wish to."

"She'll never come back here, will she?" Annick asked almost silently.

"She may return someday. However, she will have a harder time coming back here because of what she's done today." The Watchman's voice was laced with sorrow as Katarin disappeared into the dim green and into the dark, piercing silence.

She said he said

He said,
Be with me, you are everything,
you make life right.

She said,
We are together.

He said,
Not on Valentine's Day, later,
business comes first.

She said,
I'm an IOU.

He said,
Later. Much work to do,
when it's over, I'll see you.

She said,
Not important to him, anymore,
no change in sight.

He said,
I'll change, for you,
I'll be there.

She said,
Goodbye.

Anne Arbaugh

That **Man** Would Be Me

Melody and lyrics
<http://appleprice.tripod.com/song.htm>

When that sun comes up,
On the next to the last day,
I'm gonna show you how a man
Loved you fifteen hundred ways.
The way a man would,
The way a man could,
The way a man should,
And that that man would be me.

How I wish you could see
The way I've loved you
Since that day we met;
Never forget
The way you let me put
My arms around you, girl.
Shaking' my world,
Upside down,
Spinnin' around.
And that that man would be me.

When that moonlight casts
On that beach's shore,
It'll be time for a man
To come out of his shell and tell you
About those visions he caught,
That love that he sought,
And everything you taught
Him to be.
And that that man would be me.

When that bedroom light
Comes on in the middle of the night
Right after you and he
Had one of those little fights,
He'll be the first to apologize,
Never even question,
Then be the first to mention
About this song that he once wrote,
And how he loves you so,
And how he knows his love grows
More each day.
And that that he would be me.

On Becoming *a slut*

It's that first kiss that gets you in trouble.
Full of the passion and promise
you read about in all those Danielle Steele novels
and sighed over in darkened theatres.
You let yourself sink down into backseat leather
breathing in his cologne and words,
thinking, "Man, this is the *one.*" It's that kiss.

Soon enough you realize it's all about *his* passion,
not yours, and promise is just a word
turned tactic in the heat of sex.
He moves on, maybe the next day,
maybe in a few weeks, ready for new conquests.
Sometimes you are the one to move on
because this no longer feels like sweet, heady love
and you are beginning to feel like the flesh version
of the *Playboy* he used to beat off with,
then discard, before he met you.

The problem is, with every backseat, drive-in romance,
he climbs higher up the social ladder, while you descend.
Boys begin to emulate his walk, talk his talk,
hoping some of his aura will rub off and they, too, will "get lucky."
Girls dream of being the one to tame and claim him as their own.
He is "cool."

You, on the other hand, are a slut.
He was the one looking for sex, you were looking for love,
but you are a slut, no doubt about it.
The girls cast sidelong glances and sneers,
some not realizing, they too, are poised downward on the ladder.

While there are no requests for the prom or even a movie,
There is no lack of boys. Arriving with engines revved,
They pick you up, never leaving the car.
Mother beams as you go on your "date,"
Never realizing he doesn't plan to take you farther than the backseat.
When finally she gets wind of the stench of your social life,
she is shocked and all too quick to jump on the slut bandwagon.
She never owns up to letting you sally forth in total innocence
with no armor. Not so much as the definition for "virgin,"
let alone the how or why to stay one.

Now she is on their side, with Dad, a new recruit, reluctant to break ranks,
wanting to believe in your innocence,
but there is that damn diary, so there goes your last hope.
Eventually, you give up and claim the label with a vengeance,
climbing farther and faster down the ladder than anyone dared before.
A cavalier, tough exterior becomes your armor, silencing the shame
sealing in the little lost girl,
forever.

Rachel Lewis

Come Undone

I want to see myself with my eyes closed.

I want to see that vision I have of myself when I sleep but that I lose with that whisk of cool autumn air that blows the world's traffic through my window, reminding me to wake up and live.

I want to see that woman I was never quite sure I would become, that faceless, shapeless female that I knew I would one day be but chose not to imagine, generally because of laziness, maybe because I was frightened.

I want to see myself before I am aware of life, just before I look in the mirror, wearing my eye shadow of lies to the world, to my family, to my friends, to myself.

I want to see myself without the acting, without portraying my role: daughter, student, lover, manic, alcoholic.

I want to see myself, the real me, if there is such a thing.

Carly Halfter

Her Moving

Still and meditating
Ever contemplating
Subtle soft observing of the servees as they go.

Smile a sudden climbing
Over lids subsiding
Spirit *Gentle* flies and settles low.
Uproar the fire rising
Soul the sooth surprising
Echo caverns deep the caverns go.
Tune the Smile arising
Lid's *Gentle* subsiding
Surprising how the *Gentle* spirit knows.

Though the care arising
Hands that Smile and guiding
Easy words unto a friend. No foe
Brings us easy arming
Hush, the *Gentle* calming
The swallowed bitters down to caverns go.
Where match and muscle intimate
And underlings incarnate
There animated; though you wouldn't know.

Joel Griffith (2003 Graduate)

A Significant Experience

One of the most significant experiences of my entire life occurred just a few hours ago. While shuffling along outside to fetch the mail, I happened upon a tiny little leprechaun, huddled protectively over his pot o' gold at the end of a rainbow.

Of course, it was quite early in the morning. In fact, too early for the mail to be arriving. But there I was, in my nightgown, curlers in my hair, standing beside my mailbox, with a leprechaun, a pot o' gold, and the end of a rainbow just beside my slippered feet.

I figured I was sleepwalking. I mean... This can't be reality.

Can it?

Yet alas, the little leprechaun jumped atop my feet and began gnawing at my ankles. "Get away from my pot o' gold you crazy lady!" he grumbled between bites. I shrieked in pain, because really now, a leprechaun gnawing at your ankles is quite a painful experience. Painful indeed.

While I was shrieking, I managed to wake up many people. And since it was so early, it happened to be many disgruntled, angry, and really-in-need-of-their-morning-coffee people. As the mob began to shuffle their way towards me, in slippers, stockings, and bare feet, I felt my cheeks flush. By now the leprechaun had fled the scene of the crime, dragging his pot o' gold and the end of the rainbow along with him.

As the angry swarm surrounded me, brandishing their hair and tooth-brushes at me, I experienced something doctors tend to call "insanity." I woke up a few hours later in a white padded room with a very stylish new jacket fitted round me. Though I must admit, the jacket is a little tight.

Jaimee Wecker

the Night's Pipe

Silence slightly triumphed at the end of night.
Except for the forest dweller that plays his pipe.
Under the pale moon's horns that point to right.
He gawks at the moon's light... with blazing red eyes
That burn like coal in the middle.
He plays his pipe, while kin play a fiddle.
He is mounted on his frisky goat.
With whisky on every breath he blows.
His long gray beard dances while the ale flows.
Now and then, a grin on his smug face shows,
A fleshy face with an up-turned nose.
He brings warmth, though the temperature froze.
You hear him play after a sinful life,
For there is no silence at the end of night,
Just the Devil that plays his pipe.

Bryan James

Driftwood

A heart wanders,
neither lost nor found,
on waves of emotion,
through endless days and nights.

One day on smooth water,
the next on foamy crests,
smashing, crashing on the sand,
creating new shores that no one sees.

Days floating in the middle,
like driftwood caught in currents,
an eternity, repetitive, motionless,
until a breeze moves it to another place.

Anne Arbaugh

Maya Robinson-Kellum

Momentarily

I'll be distracted,
I'll forget your name,
I'll wait until the very last minute,
I'll say things like, "He is so stupid,"
And laugh at you.

I'll say the clichéd thing,
"I'll never do this again,"
I'll be involuntarily volunteering,
I'll fall hard and deep,
In love with life.
I'll look away,
Just to think,
And think on other thoughts,
Than the present conversation.
To start
To daydream about the future.

This, I warn you,
Is only momentarily,
And I promise,
Not forever,
And definitely not often.
But just enough,
To extend,
To annoy the present reality with you.

And just to note,
These are not moments
Ingrained on a tablet,
On Mount Sinai,
But
Ones to be taken as they are.

I know,
They are unpredictable,
And changing,
Like life's moments.

De'Anne Roye

the Wound

So, as I sit here on the corner of my bed;
Can't eat or sleep with memories in my head.
Cross my heart, without you I would die,
Ain't no lie that some boys do cry.

Walk me to my car one more time, please.
If you leave me, I'll be stuck on my knees,
Stuck waiting for my true love, suicide.
Your voice is haunting, nowhere to hide.

The dagger in my back is irritating,
The pain is thick, but I'm still debating:
To pull it out or leave the blade in,
The wound reminds me of where I've been.

Blood flows from me like fine red wine.
Your kiss kills me, not another dumb line.
Why must tears always follow laughter?
Will there ever be a happily ever after?

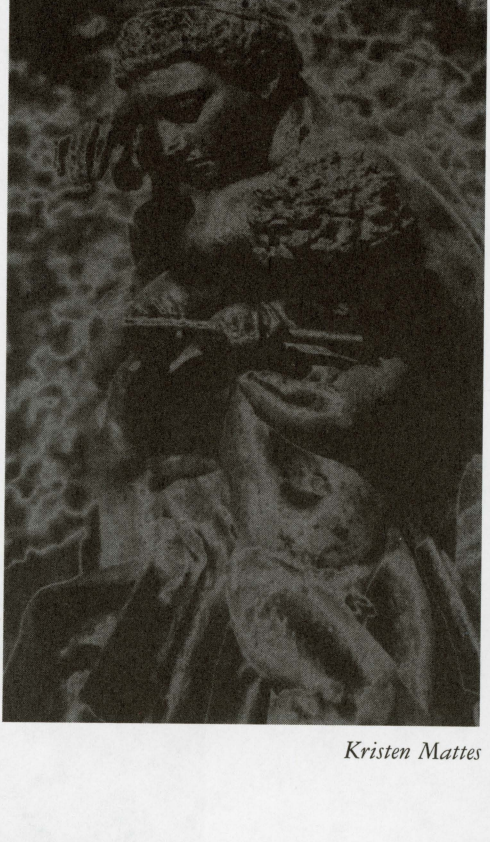
Love is more worldly than emotion;
No such truth in trust or devotion.
Is it possible for a girl to understand?
You squeeze the life out of my heart in your hand.

Can you please hand back the pieces?
Can you find a way that pain ceases?
Didn't think so; thanks for trying.
I love you still, as I lie dying.

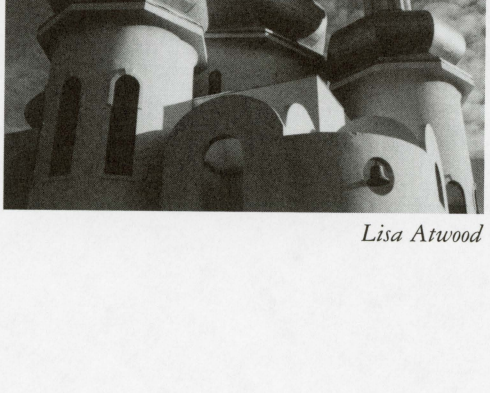
A bloody love letter from a lonely man.
You want to relate, but I don't think you can.
This is all my fault, can't live in denial.
Wish I had 911 on my speed dial.

As my lifeless body hits the floor,
I whisper, "I love you always, forevermore."

John Schools



Kristen Mattes



Lisa Atwood

Fragile Traveler

yellow butterfly
too delicate
struggles in vain
against the wind
helpless, i watch
its ocher blood
smear my windshield
sad metaphor

Kristen Mattes

R. Niven Armentrout

Paris at **Midnight**

Is someone there?
Darkness has drenched everything
And I am splashed in it,
Faster, faster, my gait quickens.
Shadows are lurking with the stealth of tigers.
Unwillingly, I am one of them;
I am part of the night, trying to blend,
But moving loudly with haste.

Tiger, tiger burning bright

I feel like I have been cheated from the inside out.
A solitary figure stands alone on the corner by the lamppost.
Is that the direction I need to go?
Yes? Oui? No.

Alone, yet surrounded... again
What will protect me?
My thoughts are racing and my stride extends,
Familiar sounds on foreign pavement.
But—
Mine are not the only footsteps shattering the pre-dawn silence;
I am not the only creature forging through the mist.
I am lost
Within and without
And afraid of what I might find.

Laurie Dudek

"MASADA Will Never Fall Again"*

We got up at 3:30 am. It was not the first time in the past three weeks that the counselors woke us up in the wee hours of the night. They woke us up even earlier, pretending to be Nazis, before we were to go to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Museum in Tel Aviv. But this time no one complained. We all knew why we got up this early—it was finally time to climb Masada. Grabbing our stuff and thanking the Bedouins for their hospitality, we rushed sleepily toward the bus.

"Are we getting breakfast?" someone asked Gili Dobrin, our counselor and tour guide.

"They have some crackers and tea set up by that tent there," Gili replied in her Israeli accent and pointed randomly.

Most of us dropped our bags on our bus seats and went over to get the traditional Bedouin hot and extremely sweet tea. Next, all of us returned to the bus.

"How long do you think it will take us to climb Masada?" someone asked.

"About 20 minutes, and for you smokers," Gili said winking, "it will probably take close to half an hour." She was an avid smoker herself and desperately tried to hide it from us. We found out three days into the trip when a pack of Time cigarettes fell out of her backpack.

"Who had the jerry cans last time?" yelled Nadav, a counselor with a maturity of a seven-year-old, into the microphone. A few hands went up. "Floria, Dan, Jake and Noah—make sure you get them filled to the top."

"Great, I get to do it on the day we climb Masada," I mumbled gravely.

The bus stopped. "Get your water bottles, hats, and put on suncream," Gili said. It was a phrase we heard over one hundred times daily.

"Gili, it's not even bright yet," a girl shouted from the back of the bus. Gili squinted and said something in Hebrew, indicating that she was not in the mood for an argument.

"Yalah," said Mike, our other counselor. That was the only word he knew in Hebrew. "Let's go, ITC2." ITC2, which stands for Israel Teen Connection Group #2, was the name of my group.

As we climbed up, step by step, almost racing to the top, I realized that there were no stars out. Usually, an Israeli sky is filled with shining stars that are visible over the desert.

It turned out that Gili was wrong. It took everyone, even the smokers, only ten minutes to climb Masada. In fact, we were the first group to get up there on that busy July morning. When the whole group gathered and each of us yelled our number in Hebrew, Gili allowed us to go and find the spot from which we would watch the sunrise over Yom Hamelah, the Dead Sea.

Along with a few other people, including Ilana, a girl from Cincinnati who quickly became my new best friend, I found a cozy spot that was hidden by a few walls. Perhaps this was part of a house that a Jewish family inhabited before they all committed suicide together. Maybe the woman who escaped with her little kid and told the story of Masada lived here. Or, maybe, this was not a house at all and I was letting my imagination wander too far.

Everyone waited. When would the sun come up? Were we in the right spot? Maybe we couldn't see the sun from here? That was ridiculous, I thought. The rays of the sun are visible from everywhere.

And then I saw a sliver of yellow slowly move upward. I gasped. The sun was so close. Was this what the Jewish zealots felt every day waking up with the dawn and falling asleep with the dusk?

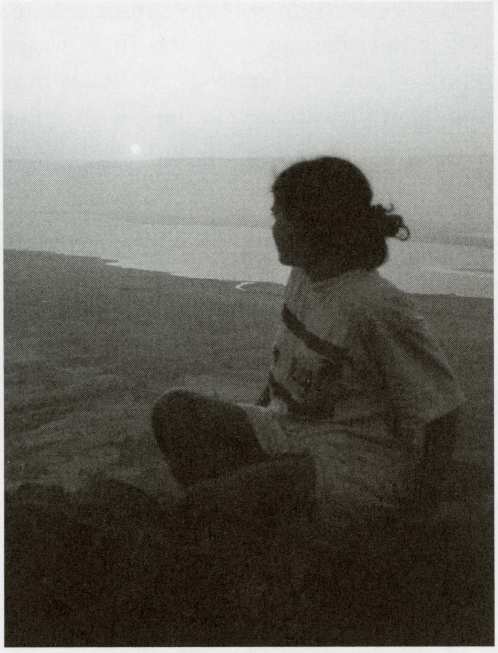
I clicked away with my camera until the sun was out of its hiding, its rays enveloping the horizon. I had already taken 23 photos out of a roll of 24. I had a specific purpose for my last shot. It was to include me and to be used as my proof of climbing Masada. I told Ilana exactly how I wanted the photo to be taken.

It came out precisely as I imagined. Out of all the photos that I took during my four-week trip none summarize it as well as this one. I am sitting in the picture all alone, yet the nature and the history of 5000 years are my companions. The Dead Sea, one of the best attractions in Israel and the lowest point on Earth, is a stretch away. When I yell out, I hear more than just an echo; I hear the voices of the Romans calling out to the Jews to give themselves up. I see men sitting on the sand and planning. They know there is no way out from the fortress. The Romans have surrounded them and are slowly building steps to climb into their city—the same steps that I used to climb Masada over an hour ago. Yet the Jews refuse to give up.

They will not surrender themselves to the enemy nor allow the enemy the satisfaction of killing them, or worse, converting them. They will remain strong and true to their beliefs till the end. They get up with the first rays of light, watch the sun rise, say Shaharit, their morning prayers, and execute their plan. Every man in the village kills his family and after that the men kill each other. Only two people—a woman and her young child—escape to tell the story.

Masada is a place with many contradictions. A place where sacrifices were made. A place where Jews disobeyed a commandment to preserve their faith. A place of remembrance and pride. A place with a great view. A place captured in one photograph. A place where I long to return.

* The defiant cry during the oath of allegiance on Masada's summit for the recruits to the Defense Forces.



Floria Volynskaya

Floria Volynskaya

On Becoming A Big O

or Thank You Shel Silverstein

i've rounded out my edges

to fill — no longer a missing piece

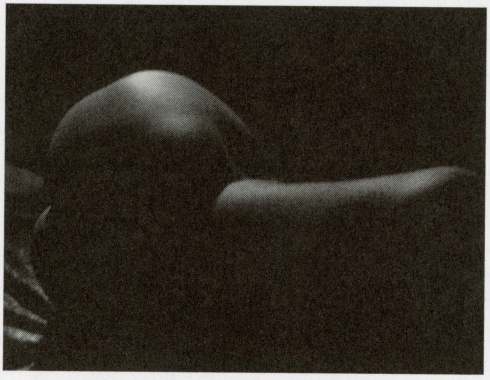
hollow center — looking for her niche

while waiting for my — you don't need me

bumps and potholes — i no longer need you

taking life's curves — i'm rolling right along

like a Goodyear tire



Rachel Lewis

R. Niven Armentrout

NeVERmind

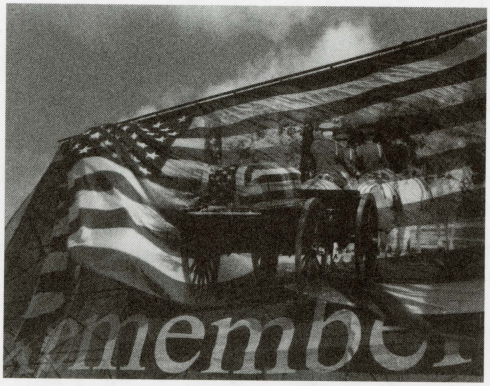
I see you
And my heart begins to beat
A million times a minute.
That is until I remember,
Until reality sets in,
And I am conscious
Of the kind of person you *really* are.
My heart slows down
To its normal pace,
The rush is gone,
Confusion takes its place.
I no longer want to run into your open arms
So I stand back
Idly
Against the cold, brick wall.

Laurie Dudek

Buried ALIVE

You settle over me like a silken shroud
warm and soft, enveloping my soul.
I cannot see clearly through the veil
or move freely in the wrappings and trappings
of a love so constrained.
I struggle to be free, to be free!
To shake the last vestiges of you—off!
to crawl out with bloodied fingers grasping
life. To stand erect looking once more
into your grave eyes.

R. Niven Armentrout



Remember *James Berglie*

America *James Berglie*

Unknown *James Berglie*

RECIPE FOR THE BEST

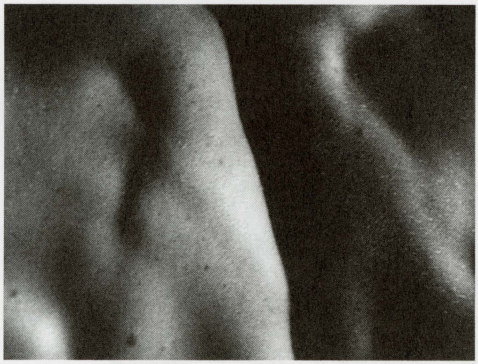
When you hunger for the best:

You feed off improvement,
You relish understanding,
You drink success,
You digest learning.

Your diet reads:
Responsibility,
Efficiency,
Comprehension.

The results are:
Self-esteem,
Zeal,
Knowledge.

Because
"You are what you eat."



Lisa Atwood

De' Anne Roye

When Night Falls

Children chase fireflies under ancient oak trees.
They glimpse one another's shadows against
Circles of lamppost illumination
When night falls.

Lovers lie basking in silent affection.
Darkness draws near and color is consumed;
Shadows mimic their counterparts' embrace
When night falls.

A trigger is pulled and windows are shattered.
Red and blue lights fight night's limitations;
The gunman they seek has already fled
When night falls.

The moon has arrived, and we forget the sun.
Our candles melt into waxen puddles,
And you and I fall asleep, we fall asleep...
When night falls.

Justine Trainor

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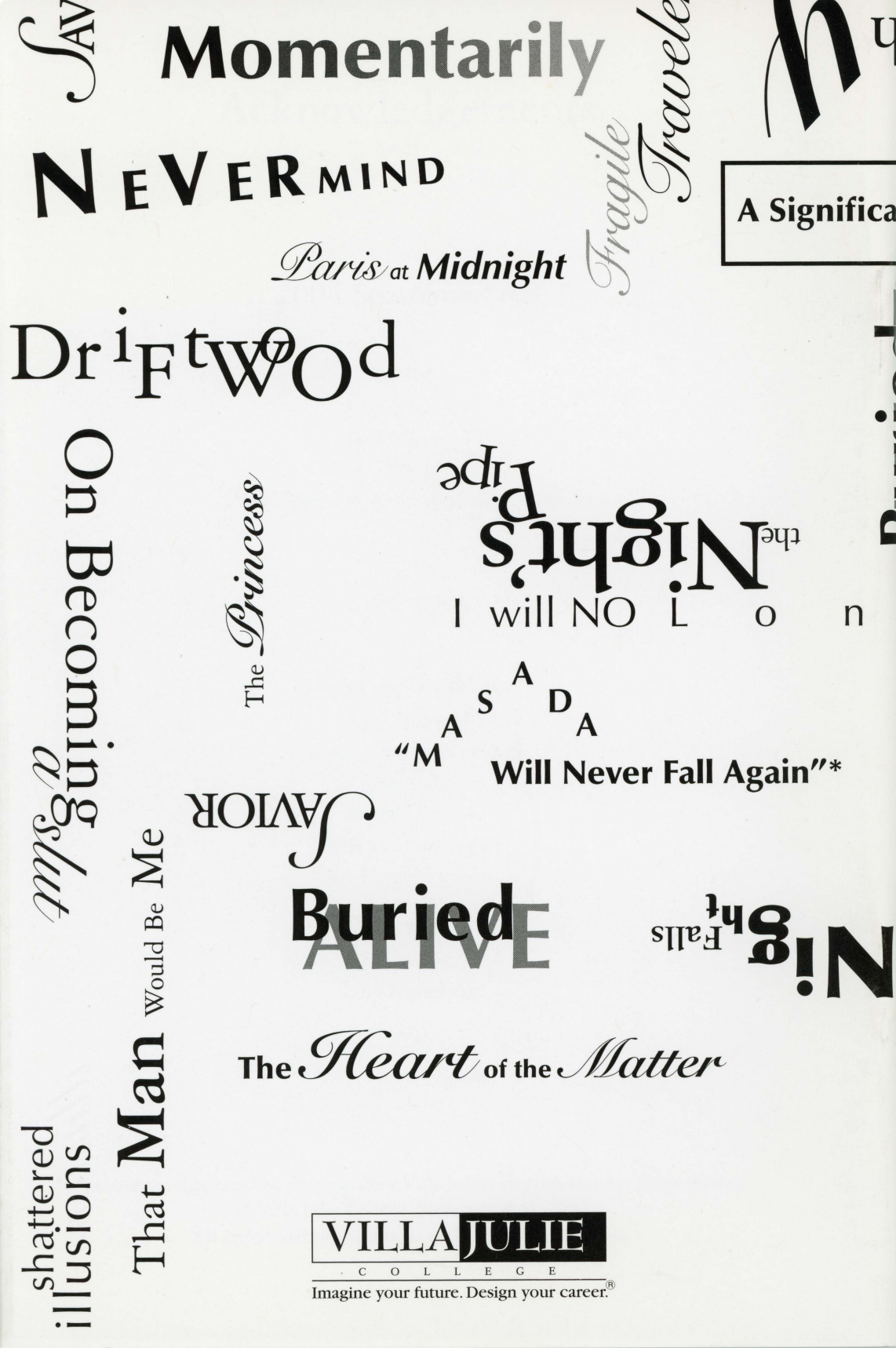

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